

ISSUE 38 / SUMMER 2019

SEEKER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE GEOCACHING ASSOCIATION
OF GREAT BRITAIN

**WHERE
TO CACHE IN
LONDON?**

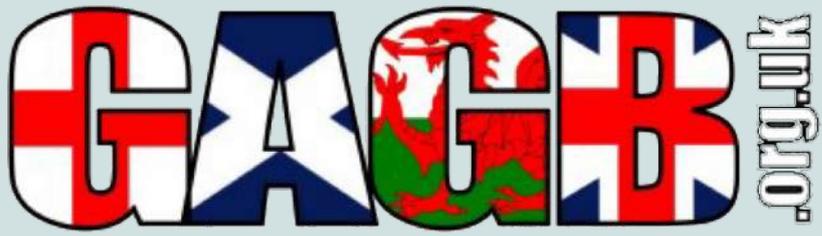
**GEOCACHING
IN KIEV AND
CHERNOBYL**





SEEKER **38** IN THIS ISSUE...

Cover: View of Cobstone Windmill, near Turville, GC3Q3M0.
Courtesy of Arthur Griffiths (Griff Grof).
Above: Harbour Cove, near GC39E4V. Courtesy of emmakeeling.



The **Geocaching Association of Great Britain** is the leading UK Geocaching body, recognised by and acting on behalf of geocachers. The Association was established in 2003 to provide a national organisation that represented geocaching, and to serve as a UK point of contact for geocachers, landowners, the media and others with an interest in geocaching. Find us online at www.gagb.org.uk.

Contributions to Seeker are welcome; please contact editor@gagb.org.uk. The Association is unable, at the present time, to pay for submissions. Copyright in all such contributions will revert to the author on publication of the subsequent issue. Pictures are published on a single-use, non-exclusive UK editorial rights basis, under which copyright remains with the photographer.

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Meet the Committee



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Chair's Message



The summer of 2019 brings lots of opportunities to go caching in the warmer weather, earn four 'Mystery at the Museum' souvenirs by August 11th and maybe meet lots of other geocachers at one or more of the summer Mega events in the UK.

It's July, so time to plan your September. GAGB CITO Week runs from September 14th to 22nd - get some advice on CITO events on page 8. Hosting a CITO is best if planned far in advance—get your skates on.

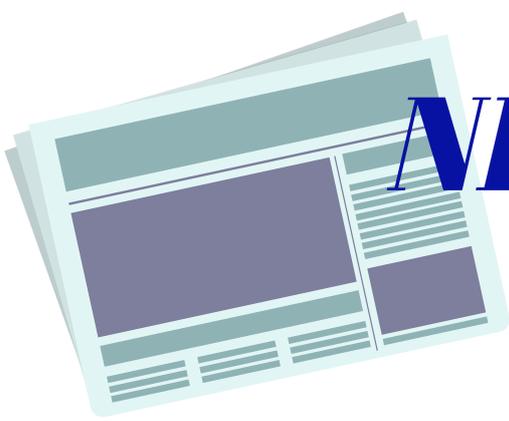
We have also launched our new Geocoin, the 'Cairngorms National Park', which is the fifth coin in our series. We have two options: our standard edition is available in antique gold and our limited edition is available in antique silver. Both can now be bought from our online shop while stocks last.

We have another puzzle solving article on cyphers, codes and strange alphabets, an article on all the different types of creative disguised caches and a travelog on Geocaching in Kiev and Chernobyl.

We also have advice on planning for a trip to London and maybe finding our GAGB London Selfie Adventure Lab caches in the major tourist parts of Westminster, visiting landmarks from the London Eye past the Houses of Parliament towards Trafalgar Square.

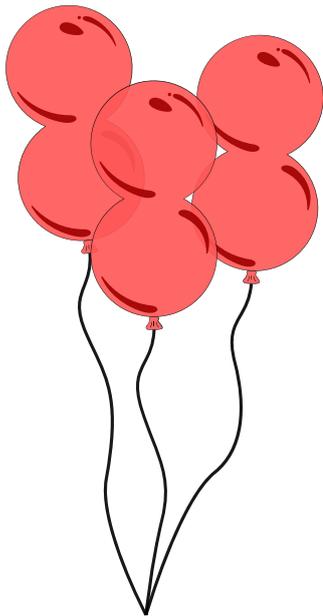
Happy caching!

NEWS ROUND-UP



Mystery at the Museum

Geocaching.com's current souvenir promotion is in full swing. There has been a jewel heist, and it is your job to collect the clues to track them down. You have until August 11th to do so, earning four souvenirs along the way.



20th Anniversary Celebrations

In 2020, two rare event cache types will return as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations! The 'Lost and Found' events will now be known as 'Community Celebration Events'. The 'Groundspeak Lost and Found Celebration' has been renamed the 'Geocaching HQ Celebration'. In other news, the 20th anniversary event in Seattle has now been published (GC896PK).

Creative Coast Project

The GAGB is closely involved with the Creative Coast project, which includes the creation of a new Geotour in South East England. This was recently covered by Kent Online - you can read their article [here](#). The project is still in its early stages, so keep an eye out for updates.



GAGB SWAG Weekend

Over the long Easter weekend, the GAGB promoted a SWAG (an acronym of 'stuff we all get') Weekend - it was a chance for cachers across the country to place some SWAG in every cache they found!



BEFORE and AFTER!



BEFORE and AFTER!

It is a shame that so many caches nowadays are empty, or containing poor swaps. The SWAG Weekend provided an opportunity to change this on a large scale. Thanks to everyone who took part - the response this year was incredible, with many profile badges awarded to those who submitted photos to prove they took part. We're certain that, together, hundreds of caches were re-stocked and transformed.

We are delighted to share just some of these before and after photos in this issue of Seeker.

We encourage you to continue in this spirit and always carry good SWAG to place in caches in need! Remember to always trade fairly!



BEFORE and AFTER!



Roving Event Reports

Back in January we held a large event inviting the UK Mega committees to Keyworth in Nottinghamshire. Richard Tucker (Richt2000) reports...

The first GAGB roving event of 2019 was a well-attended Maker Madness event in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire (GC7X2V9).

73 attended logs were received but this plays down the large number of people who spent the day in and around the village hall in Keyworth. The attendees spent the afternoon making caches, talking to the stall holders or caching around Keyworth thanks to a series of new caches put out by John Beaton aka Grumpiest Horse.

The village hall was packed with stalls from Sussex Mega, Lincolnshire Mega, Stuart Howe's

geocoins and a number of tables run by the GAGB committee and friends. The makers table was particularly busy with lots of cachers enjoying making their own log cache, magnetic cache or painted rocks. It is difficult to tell if the kids who attended had more fun than BigLynx who really enjoyed using the glue gun to make caches. The GAGB table did a lot of business selling geocoins and tags for the 2019 trackable race which was launched at this event (see page 10 for more information about the race).

The attendees enjoyed the refreshments before some left to find the new series of caches around the village.

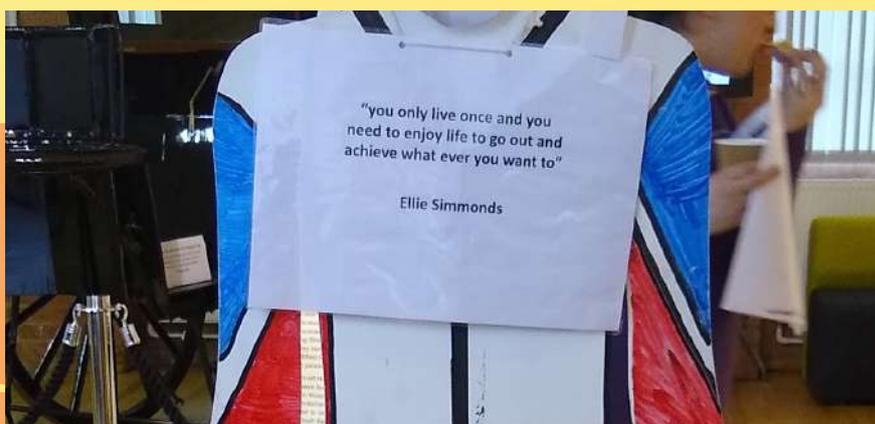
The second GAGB roving event of the year was held in the centre of Hinkley in conjunction with First50. Moira Crackers reports...

The GAGB Roving Event & Coffee with Famous Females (GC81YB0) event was held in the Atkins Building. This is a really great location space which is a renovated hosiery mill right in the centre of Hinkley.

The Atkins building is used as a local gallery space and was currently holding an exhibition on Fifty Famous Females organised by Think! The HERO Project. The exhibition is designed to highlight local and national women who can inspire the current generation of young women as they grow up. As the father of one such young woman, I can confirm that their mission was successful. My daughter was inspired, and she really enjoyed reading all the biographies about the 50 women. The Hero Project are also working with the GAGB to set-up a series of 50 caches, one for each of the famous females. We have signed up for 2 of these geocaches.

27 Attended logs were logged on the event with people dropping in throughout the day to enjoy the exhibition, the cakes and biscuits and have some geo-chat with fellow cachers.

As the location was central, many of the attendees took the advantage to go and find a few local caches after the event. Some even bought some of the local artwork in the gallery onsite.



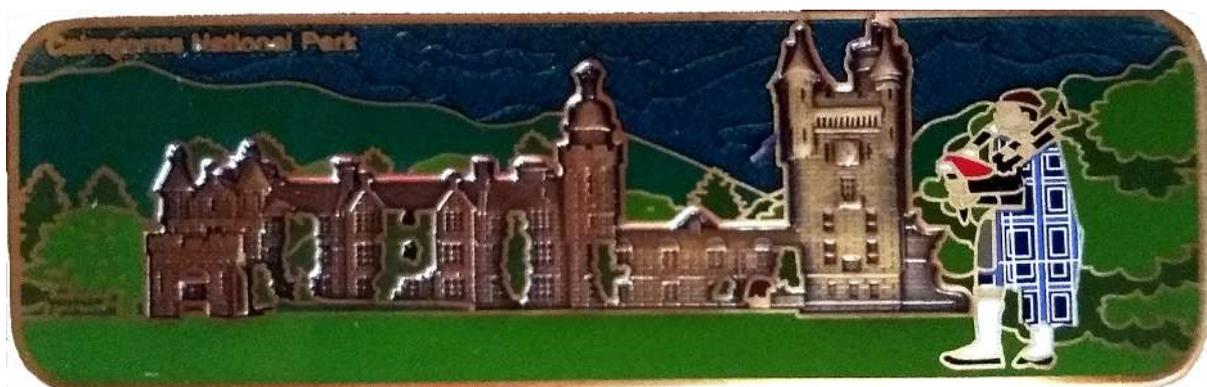
The third GAGB roving event of the year was held in Isleworth, London, in May. Richard Tucker (Richt2000) reports...

I organised and hosted GAGB Roving event in Isleworth, London. It was well received with some nice logs from the 15 attendees. We had a variety of well known local cachers in the London area including Goldpot, Lisboa_bruno, Amberel and Dumpster41. I did a number of informal sessions and one 5-10 minute session on what the GAGB do and why we exist which the attendees found interesting.



Introducing our New Geocoins...

The next National Park in our geocoin series is the Cairngorms; the coins depict Balmoral Castle. There are two editions: the standard has a gold finish and costs £14, whereas the special limited edition has an antique silver finish and is available for £18. You can **order yours today**, with the option of collecting it from us at one of the UK Mega events. Subject to availability, you can also purchase the coin(s) at our stall on the day.



CITOS AND HOW TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

What are the benefits of a CITO?

The main benefits of a Cache in Trash Out® (CITO) event can be anything from short term benefits such as a litterpick to long term benefits such as building picnic tables or planting trees. They can literally be anything to help the local environment.

Short term benefits

- If you are litterpicking, the short term benefit of this type of CITO can be a cleaner, tidier and safer area for people and animals to walk around in.
- If you are performing an environmental task as your CITO, this can have positive effects on local species and can help prevent injuries to both animals and walkers.

Long term benefits

- If you are carrying out some type of building work such as repairing footpath, bridges or building picnic tables, this will result in the area becoming more attractive and useful to future visitors.
- If you are planting trees within an area, you will help sustain the environment on a longer term basis

Who do they benefit?

CITOs can benefit the local council, organisations like the Sustrans; and other local conservation trusts. They can be an encouragement to get people into geocaching for the first time.

They are a brilliant tool to encourage people to look after the countryside and offer support to these organisations whilst claiming a find at the same time.

What kind of tasks could be undertaken at a CITO?

- Repair a footpath
- Cut grass
- Clear a canal
- Litterpick an area
- Go balsam bashing
- Go Rhoadie Bashing
- Perform a woodland survey
- Plant trees
- Clear weeds
- Build picnic tables
- Repair benches or other seating



Path clearing (GC7VZZO), photo by Tentmantent

GAGB CITO WEEK...

CUTTING, CLEARING & CLEANING

Since 2014, our Annual CITO Weekend has gone from strength to strength, with a cumulative total of 52 events and 804 'Attended' logs. This year, it's time for a change - get ready for GAGB CITO Week, beginning on Saturday September 14th and ending on Sunday September 22nd. That's nine full days! We encourage you to organise a CITO for GAGB CITO Week. Two profile badges are up for grabs - one for organisers, and another for attendees.

In addition, as it falls within Groundspeak's autumn CITO season, attendees will also obtain an official souvenir. Let's smash some records and make this the UK's biggest CITO Week ever!

CITO events take longer to organise than you might imagine, so make sure you start early. Plenty of tips and more information can be found on the GAGB website.

How to organise a CITO...



1

What type of CITO do you want to hold?



Litter Pick



Planting



Fence building



Coppicing



Anything else that helps improve or conserve the natural environment

2

Speak to the local council, park ranger, or whoever manages the land

3

Confirm date

4

Create event page and submit for review

#GAGB2019



THE RACE IS ON!

Are you a geocache Retriever, or do you prefer to be a Pointer for others to go get it? Do you prefer being a Setter of caches? Or perhaps, knowing your love of Tupperware, are you a Boxer? No matter which kind of Geocaching Hound you are, you'll want to join the GAGB's trackable race.



How to take part

Official GAGB Racing Hound tags are automatically eligible in the competition regardless of the date purchased or activated - they can join the game late, as we know who they are before even you do. We have a leaderboard and update it regularly so you'll know how well you are doing. There are six winners in our competition, which will be verified by the 2019/2020 GAGB committee, the Long Distance Runner race, four Best of Breed races and a prize draw for the non winners.

Tags cost £5.50 each, and 50% of the profits will be donated to the UK Mega Events - so join the race to help support them!

FURTHER DETAILS AND THE
CURRENT LEADERBOARD CAN BE
FOUND AT
[WWW.GAGB.ORG.UK/TRACKABLE-
RACE.PHP](http://WWW.GAGB.ORG.UK/TRACKABLE-RACE.PHP).

Get Ready for a

A Mega event is an event with at least 500 people in attendance. This summer, there are three Mega events taking place in the UK.

Saturday 3rd August 2019 - Piratemanía 12 (GC7Z9YH)

This year, Piratemanía returns to Cartmel Racecourse in the Lake District National Park. Camping and side events begin on Thursday 1st August and end on Sunday 4th August. At the main event, there will be geocaching stalls, traders, a raffle and a tombola - and, of course, new Lab caches.

Saturday 10th August 2019 - Aberdeenshire UK Mega 2019 (GC7WEP4)

The Annual UK Mega event is heading to the beautiful county of Aberdeenshire in Scotland. A total of 16 side events are being organised, beginning on Monday 5th August - from dolphin watching, to Highland games and even a Christmas party... there's something for everyone! The Mega itself will be held at Crathes Castle, where there will be geocaching stalls, a pipe band, a Doric choir, children's entertainment, new caches (including Labs), local produce and lots more!



MEGA

Summer!

Saturday 7th September 2019 - GeocoinFest Europe 2019 (GC7TTNT)

In the late summer, GeocoinFest will be held in the UK for the first time EVER. This exciting event will take place in the Manchester Central Exhibition Centre. It is ideal for geocoin enthusiasts, but all geocachers are welcome. While there is a charge to enter the exhibition area, access to the logbook and Lab cache information is free. There are side events on Friday, Saturday evening and Sunday.

The GAGB will have a stall at each of these Mega events - come and say hello, browse our shop (don't miss your chance to get your hands on our brand new geocoin) and find out more about what we do.

LOG YOUR WILL ATTENDS TODAY!

ADVENTURE LABS

WHAT ARE THEY?

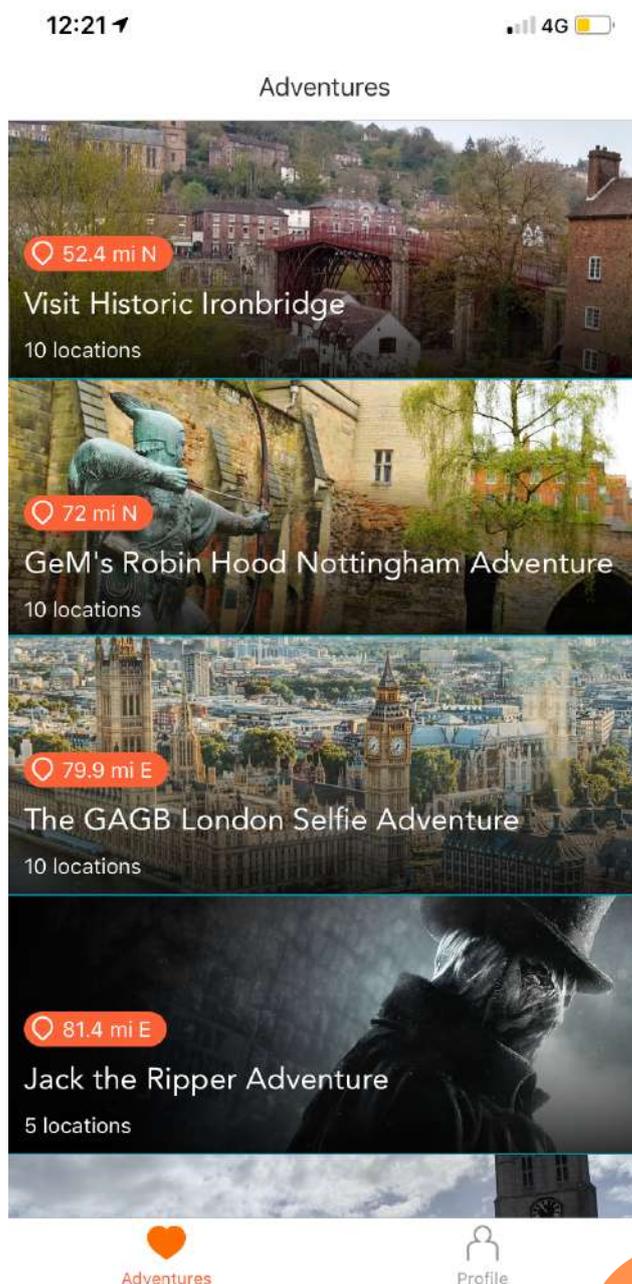
Lab caches were initially only available to find at Mega and Giga events. With Adventure Labs, up to 10 different Lab caches are placed to form one single 'Adventure', and they remain live for at least six months. Lab caches are not required to have a container and can even be located indoors. Unlike other cache types, they do not have a Difficulty/Terrain rating or cache size, and written 'Found It' logs are not submitted - a code must be located and entered instead. They also do not appear on the geocaching map, and cannot be found using the search functions on the geocaching website.

HOW TO PLAY THEM

The 'Adventure Lab' app is required. You can download it from the App Store (iOS) or Google Play Store (Android). The app uses mobile data, which means that you have to have good reception, or access to nearby wifi, in order to complete Adventure Labs. The web player for Lab caches has also been retired, so you also need the Adventure Lab app to log Lab caches placed for Mega and Giga events.

WHERE ARE THEY?

At the time of writing, there are twelve Adventure Labs across the UK - including the GAGB's own, in central London. With deadlines to set up more Adventure Labs on the horizon (see Timeline), this number is likely to increase. There are also Adventure Labs in Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire and West Sussex.



THE GAGB'S LONDON SELFIE ADVENTURE

122

PARTICIPANTS

81 ADVENTURES
COMPLETED

1027 LOCATIONS
COMPLETED

The adventure takes the player through a number of locations in the Central London area, ranging from the London Eye, to Big Ben and Trafalgar Square. All locations are wheelchair accessible and are perfect for taking that London Selfie. Each location has a question that you have to answer. This proves that you were doing the selfie adventure and not sitting at home looking on Google Maps! Check out page 14 for some advice on where else to cache in London while you're there.



December 21st 2018 - Many geocaching organisations offered an Adventure Lab credit



January 30th 2019 - Experienced geocachers invited to request an Adventure Lab credit



April 25th 2019 - Deadline for geocaching organisations to set up their Adventure Lab



June 19th 2019 - The randomly selected experienced geocachers who requested an Adventure Lab credit are notified.



June 25th 2019 - Geocaching organisations contacted for the second time, offered another Adventure Lab credit



End of July 2019 - Deadline for the experienced geocachers to set up their Adventure Lab



August 20th 2019 - Deadline for geocaching organisations to place their second Adventure Lab



DAY TRIP TO GREENWICH

WHERE TO CACHE?

London is filled with special and unique caches. Ant Reid (sharant) takes a look at where to cache in the city, and highlights some of the gems for you to add to your To Do list.

If it's your first time visiting London, maybe you just stick to the main sights and pick up a few of the obvious Virtuals and EarthCaches. If you've got the time to explore, maybe you'll try out the Adventure Lab series (including GAGB's own Selfie tour in Westminster). And die-hards will look for those oldies (the Abbey Road Webcam, the Sherlock Holmes Virtual-Multis, the Rainbow series). But what then? Where do you go that's interesting, not obvious, and a bit cachey?



An obvious target, given that Greenwich is the centre of the world, longitude-wise anyway.

Here's an interesting way to make it a day trip for cachers and trippers alike. Kick things off in the heart of the City at GC5E4B, at the top of the Monument. Then go in Monument Station and walk through to Bank Station's 'Docklands Light Railway' platforms. Get yourself right at the front of these driverless trains for a lovely journey through the Docklands to 'Island Gardens'. Along the way you pass GC5WW7Z, and when you get out, admire the view from the gardens - but you are here for GCJ3V8, the Subterranean Sub-Aqua cache. No spoilers, just go and do it, and when you figure out how to get from one end to the other, we'll pick up the story about 50ft away in Greenwich...

There are a handful of caches in the lovely town itself - and a Wherigo in the old Admiralty buildings now used by the University. Then, look up that hill - that's where you are headed. Go on, take a picnic, and head up to GCK7HH, the Royal Observatory virtual cache which has been there since 2004. This is the zero line, the historic 'ground zero' for navigation, so remember to genuflect or bow or wave or something in honour (or honor!) of the first successful treasure-hunting technology.

There's another three Wherigos on the hill, so plenty of options, or just admire the view and see how many of London's buildings (and hills) you can name...

When your day is done, don't simply reverse the journey back. You can catch a boat back to central London, or you can go on to the O2 via a series of Mystery caches, and take the AirLine over the river. Plenty of options there..

SPECIAL SERIES

Get your walking shoes on, and allow one of these series to take you to interesting and historic places. Use the bookmarks on each cache to find the others in the series.

- Rainbow: start at GC56DD
- Sherlock Holmes: ancient and very unusual multis, start at GC2822 and be prepared to chase all over Zone 1!
- Catastrophe, Calamity, Cataclysm: start at GC5E4A
- From a Swan to the Canary: a riverside walk for a sunny day, passing plenty of sites, sights, and pubs! Start at GC13NEE (in the city) or GC13PJQ (Docklands).



SPECIAL CACHES

- A well-hidden cache on London Bridge: GC37D9X
- A cache big enough for TBs in Holborn?: GC7QEJJ
- A Webcam on Abbey Road: GC6F12
- A Multi-cache inside the British Library!: GC2M0AF
- Thousands pass this each day without noticing: GC6GJXA
- A little bit of Egypt: GC59ANJ

And get your wellies on for:

- GC4W3RA can be accessed by ferry from Canary Wharf, or by bus from the southbank.
- GC214CT - you could get wet if you try this at the wrong time...
- GC4E - Travel further out from Central London to visit the tribute plaque of the First in England, located near Kingston Upon Thames. You can find the tribute cache while there (GC29W7J).



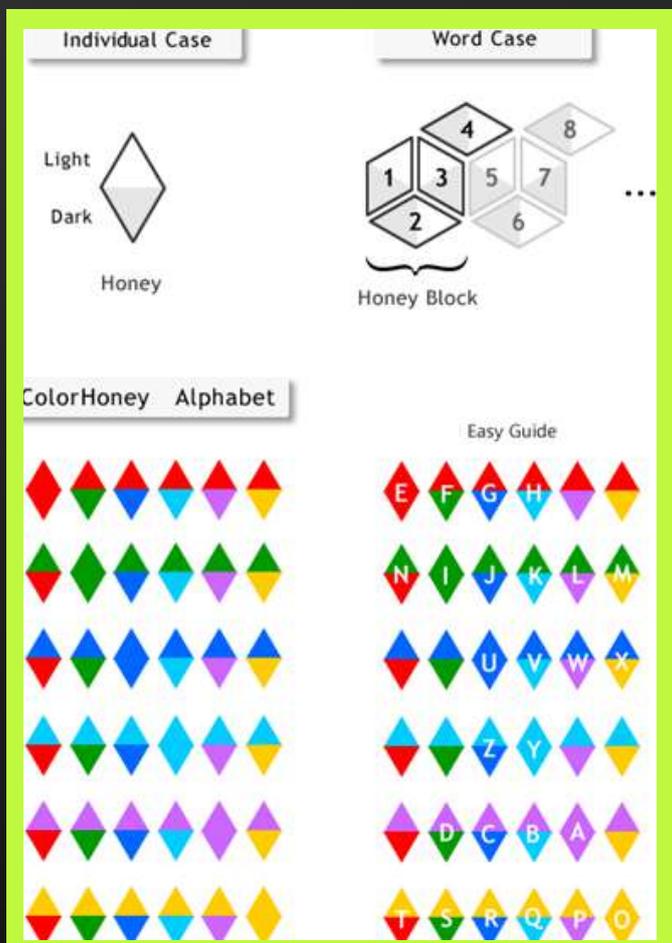
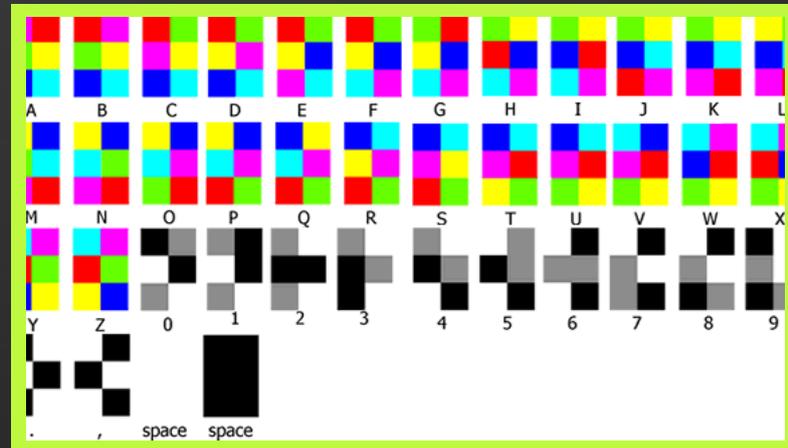
CYPHERS, CODES AND STRANGE ALPHABETS

(PART 3)

This is the third part of our quick guide, written by Graham Haddock (Grahamthegray), to some commonly used text cyphers and how they are used in Mystery caches. This time, Graham takes a look at colour and image based ones.

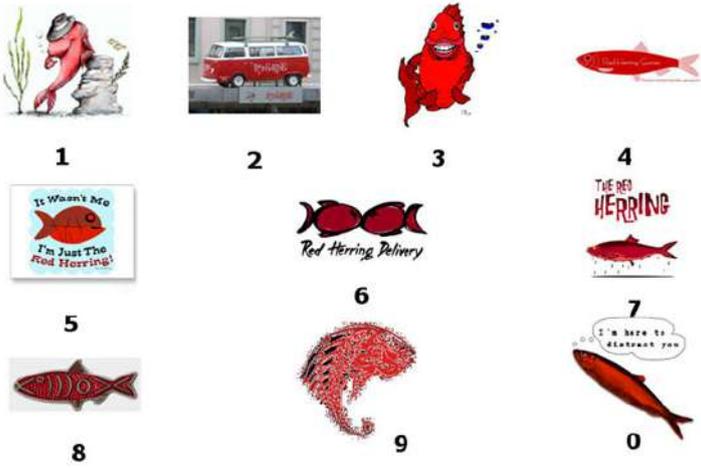
HEXAHUE

Hexahue was invented by Josh Cramer. He was inspired to come up with a unique alphabet that could substitute standard English writing for combinations of colours that were easily able to be distinguished. Hexahue colours are more 'commonly' recognized colours, with 'common' names, and yet they are simple to write in HTML notation. Letters are written in 2x3 squares with incrementing patterns of 6 of the colours (red, green, blue, yellow, cyan, and purple). Numbers are written with incrementing patterns of 3 of the colours (black, gray, white).



COLOUR HONEY & COLOUR TOKKI

The Colour Honey and Colour Tokki alphabets were invented by Kim Godgul in 2009 as alternative ways of writing English. They use six colours (red, green, blue, cyan, magenta, yellow) and different shapes to represent different letters, with each letter being represented by two colours. The scripts are similar, but use different shapes and are structured slightly differently. Tokki means rabbit in Korean



RED HERRING CODE

This strange picture code is made up of red herrings representing numbers.

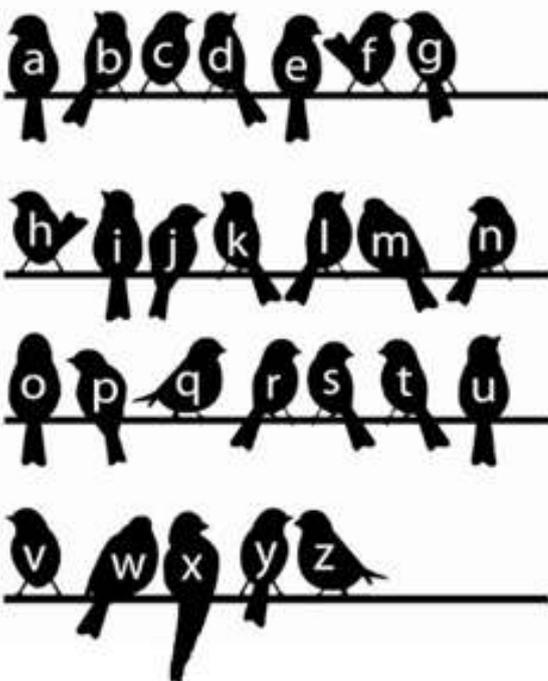
MAGIC EYE IMAGES OR

HIDDEN IMAGE

STEROGRAMS



This type of single image stereogram has a hidden image within it - thus the name. These often require looking at the image in a certain way to see the numbers. The example above says "hello" within it... can you see it? Don't worry if you can't, as there is a Magic Eye Solver at magiceye.ecksdee.co.uk



BIRDS ON A WIRE

This cipher is shown as birds sitting on lines. It can be made up of silhouettes like the image to the left, but could be bird images sitting in same position.

Do you have any ciphers that we haven't covered in our three articles? Met any you don't recognise? Let us know —on social media, via email, or in our forums.

Disguised Containers

This article is about Disguised containers (DISCO caches) and how to find them. There are many different types of DISCO caches, and Dominic Murray (Geocaching Womnle) discusses some of them below...

ARTIFICIAL GRASS

This type of DISCO cache is commonly found under a piece of artificial turf with a cable tie. They are useful for large areas of grassland where a traditional box would be far too obviously spotted. These are usually significantly harder to find if it has been a very rainy season. You can find these by looking for something out of place and following the clear hint provided by the CO.



FAKE STICK AND LOG

These types of DISCO caches are commonly located inside sticks or logs. They are often hidden in woodlands and alongside footpaths with trees. These can usually be found by looking in a pile of sticks or logs and being aware of the clue. They are usually mounted and glue gunned into one end of the stick or log, or within the latter. They may take several minutes to locate.



FAKE PINECONE

This type is a plastic pine cone with a cache on the underside of the pinecone. They are useful for pine woodland and near standing pine trees as everyone is likely to ignore them. These are usually found by looking carefully for something that looks out of place and looks a little plastic they can be fairly easy to find to a trained cacher's eye.



FAKE ROCK

This type of DISCO cache looks like a conventional rock and may commonly be found in areas with a high amount of stones or close to fences. These can be hard to find depending on their size and construction. Looking for a small georock can at times be harder than looking for a large one. Small georocks are normally grey in colour and located close to fence or signposts. Larger georocks may be located deep inside woodland areas and not be immediately obvious - they are normally grey in colour and occasionally have clip top lids.



FAKE SPIDER

This type of DISCO cache looks like a spider and can normally be found hiding in plain sight. They are commonly used near or on ivy covered trees. These can usually be found by taking a second look at a tree you have previously ignored and noticing the artificial spider hanging on the tree. The logbooks are usually underneath the spider and require tweezers to extract.



FAKE NUT OR BOLT

This type of DISCO cache is commonly found in both rural and urban areas as a way of disguising the cache without drawing too much attention to it. They are less obvious than you may think to find. These may be able to be undone by hand or may require special tools to do so. They are generally located in less conspicuous areas. However some are near large urban areas full of muggles. If this is the case put on a fluorescent jacket and use it as urban camouflage and continue searching for the cache unhindered. They can take anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes to find.



FAKE SNAIL

This type of DISCO cache looks like a conventional snail and may be magnetic or hiding in plain sight on a tree or around the roots of a plant. They are useful for caches where a standard cache may not be appropriate such as by flowers or close to plants. These can be hard to find as they may not look immediately obvious to the naked eye. The log book is normally underneath the snail.



SHEEP'S WOOL

This type of DISCO cache is commonly found attached to fences in fields of sheep. They are useful for high difficulty rating caches in sheep fields. These are usually found by using a very clear hint and carefully checking the surrounding areas. You can find them by looking for the sheep's wool attached with wire to the fence as opposed to naturally.

FAKE RUBBISH

This type of DISCO cache is normally found in areas where they are not obvious to the naked eye and some searching may be required. They can be found in both urban and rural areas. They can be anything from something that looks like a discarded bottle to a bottle top with a cache underneath. Usually the CO will have provided a reasonable amount of information for you to locate this type fairly quickly. Be on the lookout for something out of place whilst finding this one.

FAKE SIGN

This type of DISCO cache is commonly found in urban areas and may be used to evade the cache from prying eyes and create a higher level of difficulty. These are generally magnetic and may or may not have a logbook on the back ensure you read the hint carefully prior to finding them.

FAKE ANIMAL POO

This type of DISCO cache looks like a fake animal poo and can be quickly located if you are aware of what you are looking for. These can usually be found thanks to a clear hint from the CO and good GPS co-ordinates although caution is advised with this type of cache.

FAKE CCTV CAMERA

This type of DISCO cache is commonly found in areas with very high urban traffic. They should only be attempted if the hint is clear enough to understand and done at times of low traffic. These can only be attempted at times when the areas are quiet. The cache is usually a CCTV camera without the batteries, with the container on the underside of the camera once it is removed from the wall.

What Should be Included in a Caching Kit Bag?

By **Geocaching Womble (Dominic Murray)**

One of the most common questions asked by new cachers is "what should I carry in my caching bag?". After looking back through the previous issues of *Seeker*, I noticed that this has never been addressed.

A caching bag should be a durable rucksack. This is because caching may involve being out in all kinds of weather conditions. So as a result you want something reliable.

The first thing you should carry in a caching bag is at least 2 or 3 pens for signing logbooks. It never hurts to have a backup pen in case yours runs out in the middle of caching.

The next thing is several pairs of tweezers as it is surprising how many you can lose whilst out in the field. The tweezers are there primarily for retrieving logbooks from micro and nano caches.

Carrying spare logbooks is a useful thing to do. You sometimes come across logbooks that are full or need replacing (due to damage, wetness, or other problems). You can save the cache owner a trip by adding a logbook appropriate for the size of the cache. The GAGB offers a range of free printable logbooks in all sizes that you can carry with you out in the field.

Next on your list should be something to drink. Caching is a very energetic sport and it is quite easy to become dehydrated on hot days through no fault of your own. So having a very large bottle of water during your trip is a must.

If you are going caching for an extended period of time on a long trail, carrying some food is essential. This is so you can eat whilst on the trail - stop to have a reasonable break along the route!

Another thing you should carry is a small first aid kit in case of injury. Having a first aid to cover any open wounds and tools to remove ticks from yourself is a must especially in the summer months.



Next on your list should be a compass and a map. This is normally carried to ensure you have an adequate backup in case your GPS fails whilst out on the trail.

Additionally a mobile phone with a charged battery should be carried in order to call for help if required (and to use a geocaching app, if you prefer to cache by phone!). Particularly in the summer months the chances of being bitten by adders within the UK are higher whilst looking for caches and you should have an appropriate means of calling for help if this happens.

Another thing that can be particularly useful whilst caching is a high visibility vest as this allows you to tackle urban caches without a second glance from the surrounding muggles. This is because everyone assumes you are doing something official and automatically leaves you alone to cache without interruption.

In addition a torch can be very useful for finding caches in darker areas or at night.

Having some kind of magnetic pickup device in order to help get magnetic caches can be very useful and should be included in your caching bag.

Another useful piece of kit to include in your caching bag is several sets of spare batteries for your GPS (if you use one instead of a smartphone). This is because phone signals may not always be great and you may have to look for caches in the traditional way. If your batteries die it can ruin your caching day if you don't have spares!

If you are considering trading from a geocache, having SWAG (swaps) in your bag is a must so you can trade fairly and keep caches well stocked.



The Caches!



DNF's Anonymous No4

Travel Diaries

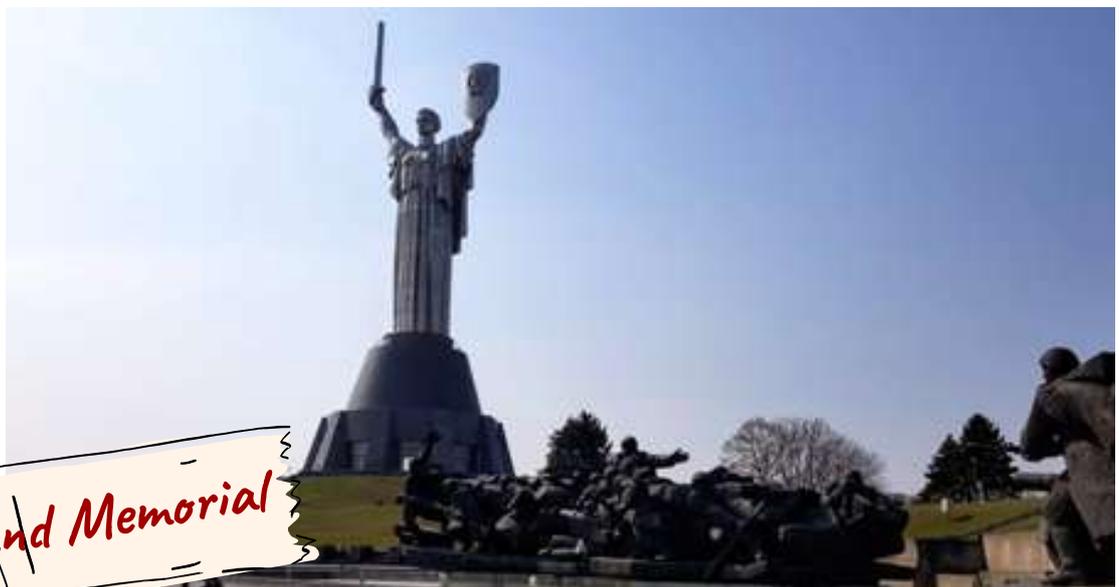
Geocaching in Kiev and Chernobyl

By Richard Tucker (RichT2000)

89deanok (Dean) was celebrating a birthday milestone this year. His wife emmakeeling (Emma), the_dolan (Linda) and myself (RichT2000) wanted to arrange a surprise trip to somewhere he has always wanted to go: Chernobyl in Ukraine.

The trip had been planned for months. We had told him we were going to "Poland" for a long weekend, except everyone else knew we were off to Kiev and Chernobyl. He finally found out the real destination via a quiz in the car on the way to Gatwick.

We stayed in the centre of Kiev. It was a very easy city to get around. The taxis via Uber were incredibly cheap and easy to use. This made caching and sightseeing a breeze. We'd go across town, do some sightseeing, caching and then take an Uber to our next destination. One highlight in Kiev was the Motherland Monument. This is the location for a Virtual cache dating from 2002 (<https://coord.info/GC36C6>). It is the oldest cache in Ukraine. The area holds an extensive museum of World War 2 and Cold War military hardware including tanks and aircraft. It also has several monuments to the events in Ukraine during World War 2 including the very impressive Motherland Monument which is visible throughout much of the city.



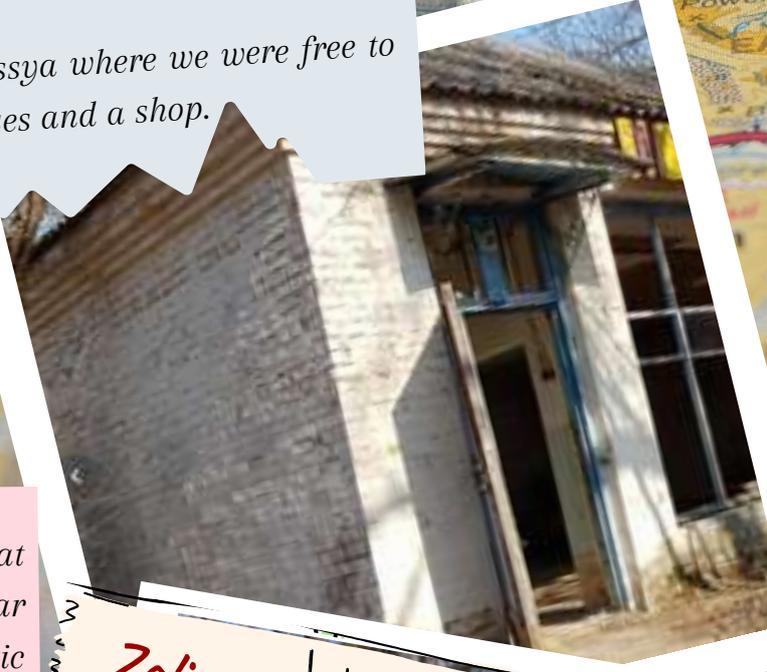
Motherland Memorial

The majority of the geocaches in Kiev had both English and Ukrainian descriptions and hints so this made finding the caches and solving some of the large number of puzzles possible to a non-Ukrainian speaker. We had a full day of sightseeing and geocaching around the centre of Kiev followed by some incredibly good value food and drink in the evening near the hotel. The next day was the day trip to Chernobyl. The trip was organised through a specialised tour company. They deal with the Ukrainian government and security services to ensure access to the 30km and 10km exclusion zones surrounding the powerplant. We met the tour bus very early outside the Kiev station on a sunny morning armed only with our passports, long sleeved clothing, a packed lunch and a sense of adventure.

The guides explained that we would be driving for 2 hours north towards Belarus before stopping at the 30km checkpoint. Our passports were checked, and we were issued with our personal Geiger counters. These were set to provide a warning alert if the radiation got above 2 Micro Sieverts per hour ($\mu\text{Sv/h}$). The background radiation at the checkpoint was $0.17 \mu\text{Sv/h}$.

Our first stop was the abandoned village of Zalissya where we were free to explore the abandoned village complete with houses and a shop.

The second stop was the top-secret radar station at Duga. Constructed in 1976, this over-the-horizon radar system was designed to detect the launch of ballistic and nuclear missiles aimed towards the Soviet Union. The site was known as the Russian Woodpecker as the radar waves produced by Duga were so powerful they produced a worldwide knocking noise on high frequency radio channels. The triangulation of these noises enabled NATO to determine the location of the "secret" site. The station itself falls within the 10km exclusion zone surrounding Chernobyl. As a result, it was shut down and abandoned after the nuclear disaster. Today, you can walk around the radar array and this was the first location where we found some geocaches.



Zalissya Supermarket

Radar Station Duga



Many of the geocaches inside the exclusion zone come with clear instructions. No swaps, no TBs, if questioned, explain what you are doing. Each geocache comes with a spoiler photo which clearly shows you where the container is hidden. We had followed some advice received from another geocacher and had printed off the photo hints as the phone reception was nil and the GPS unit we have does not support photos.

The tour continued to the abandoned school at **Коначи**. Here we were shown the first radioactive hot-spot. Our Geiger counters started beeping as we held them near the ground outside the school. The readings here were 4 $\mu\text{Sv/h}$.



School Dormitory

After finding the geocache nearby (GC7TJQ6), we were taken to the reactor itself. I was the only member of our party who remembered the actual events of 1986. It was quite moving for me to stand next to the reactor, encased in its new sarcophagus paid for by the European Union. The steel and concrete now cover the site of the worst nuclear disaster in the world at that time. Many brave people went to their deaths here preventing further disaster without regard to their own personal safety. In comparison, it felt like an utterly trivial task to find the virtual cache GC7B8RN which pays tribute to all those men and women who laid their life on the line to prevent further contamination.

The afternoon of the tour was dominated by an extensive tour of the abandoned city of Pripyat. Pripyat was founded in 1979 to house the workers at the Chernobyl power plants only 2km to the East. The city comprised 160 apartment blocks, hospital, 15 schools, cinema, amusement park, stadium, office blocks, swimming pool, 25 shops and super markets and hotel.

At the time of the explosion, it was home to 50,000 people. It was evacuated on April 27th 1986, 36 hours after the explosion. The residents were allowed to return once to collect a bag of belongings and since then, the city has been left as it was.

The city was used as a base for the firefighting and clean-up activities and contains a number of hotspots as a result. The amusement park was used as a landing ground for the helicopters which sprayed water into reactor during the fire fighting. The patches of dust and earth that you can see surrounding the ferris wheel are particularly radio active with one hot spot registering $115 \mu\text{Sv/h}$.



The Amusement Park

Pripyat Office Block



After walking around the city for about 2 hours finding a few caches and marvelling at the Soviet brutalist architecture, we got back on the coach for the trip back to the check point where we would be checked for radiation. Our Geiger counters had been taking a record of the radiation exposure during the day. The guide explained that our total dosage today was less than a single x-ray at a dentist. We would get more exposure to radiation as we flew home to Gatwick than we received today.

Our total for the day was 0.3 Roentgens, 10 caches and amazing memories to last a lifetime.

On the last day in Kiev, we held an event in a local coffee shop. It was well attended with some of the local cachers coming for a geo-chat along with a pair of visiting cachers from Prague including the organiser of the MEGA in Terezin, Czechia.

Meet The Midlanders - Kiev Edition



After the event, we spent a few hours doing some more sightseeing by Uber before returning to the UK tired but keen to explore more far flung destinations (provided there are some geocaches to find).

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